

(This is from the Dec. 24, 1953 issue of the *Clipper*.)

The Landing of the Cable

The "Cable Office" near Bluefish River, now owned by the Daniel Browns of Milton, is named for the cable which was landed here in 1869. The cable extends from Brest, France, to the southern end of the Grand Bank, thence to the French island of St. Pierre, and thence down past Cape Breton Island and Nova Scotia to the shore of Massachusetts. The length of cable from Brest to St. Pierre is 2584 miles; from St. Pierre to Duxbury, 749 miles; the total length is 3333 miles from end to end, nearly 1200 miles longer than the Anglo-American cable.

The vessel used for carrying and laying this cable was the "Great Eastern," a steamship 5 times the size of the biggest vessel then afloat and built to carry 4,000 passengers. This iron ship was profiled in 4 recent issues of the *New Yorker* (beginning in the Sept. 19 issue). Duxbury is mentioned in this article.

The "Great Eastern" left Brest about the middle of June and reached St. Pierre the middle of July, while 2 smaller vessels proceeded to Duxbury with the cable for this end. They arrived off Rouse's Hummock on July 23, and were here received by the townspeople and distinguished guests.

In *Historic Duxbury*, written by Laurence Bradford, we read:

"It was a beautiful summer day, the sea unruffled. Two large boats were lashed together and a platform built over them, on which enough cable was coiled up to reach the shore. To this sort of raft was attached a large boat manned with sailors bending to their oars, moved slowly to the beach." When they reached there the sailors seized the cable and dragged it up the beach to the Hummock, amid cheers from the people and salutes from the vessels. It is said that many of the gentlemen from Boston assisted in pulling the cable up the beach.

A paragraph from the *New Yorker*:

"In contrast to the Great Eastern's earlier cable-laying adventures, the journey from Brest to St. Pierre was fairly uneventful. She encountered 2 storms and some fog, but these proved only routine obstacles, and on the 22nd day Captain Halpin kept a rendezvous with the shore-end cable-layer, the William Cory, which was standing 30 miles off St. Pierre to meet him. The cables were spliced and the French governor of the island came aboard the Great Eastern. The next day was the 80th anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, and eloquent messages flashed between Paris and the last remaining French colony in North America. There was no celebration aboard the Great Eastern, which was preparing to go home immediately....The Scanderia, another shore-end cable-layer, spun the cable to Duxbury. While she was trudging along, political gongs were struck in Washington. There was a group of senators who resented the landing of a foreign cable on these rock-ribbed shores and were demanding a 100 percent American transatlantic cable. The English had 2

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and now the French were getting one, and it was feared there would be no business left for an American-owned cable if and when somebody got around to laying one. (Cyrus Field must have smiled to think how many times in years past he had vainly tried to sell cable stock to his fellow Americans.) Congress had adjourned for the summer and the patriots declared the cable could be landed only with the approval of that body. Then Secretary of State Hamilton Fish settled the matter by abruptly granting permission to land the cable. It came ashore on July 23, and Duxbury gave it a rousing reception."

One of the speakers of the day was Stephen Nye Gifford, father of Mary Gifford and grandfather of Stephen Gifford of St. George St. The fact that he was wearing a frock coat didn't keep him from wading into the water to help drag the cable ashore!